

The bill establishes the "Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States." The Commission will focus on two key tasks: first, it will conduct original research on the collection and disposition of Holocaust-era assets that came under the control of the United States Government after Hitler came to power in 1933 (assets including gold, gems, bank accounts, financial instruments, insurance policies, and art works); and second, it will review research already conducted by public and private entities. The Commission will prepare a final report, summarizing its findings and making recommendations to me, which will be completed by December 31, 1999.

As we finish the business of the 20th century, we must examine difficult aspects of our history in order to build a better world for our children in the next millennium. Establishing a Commission to study these issues sends a strong message, both at home and abroad, that the United States Government is determined to acknowledge and address the fate of Holocaust assets domestically.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
June 23, 1998.

NOTE: S. 1900, approved June 23, was assigned Public Law No. 105-186.

Statement on the Nomination of Kenneth Prewitt To Be Director of the Bureau of the Census

June 23, 1998

A fair and accurate census is a fundamental part of representative democracy and good government. To ensure that we conduct a sound and successful census in the Year 2000, I am pleased to nominate Dr. Kenneth Prewitt to be the next Director of the United States Census Bureau.

The decennial census is the foundation for our most important public values. It is the means by which everyone in this country is counted. It is the basis for providing equality under the law. And it is the single most important source of information about the American people.

By using the census, the Federal Government is able to designate funding for and evaluate programs across the Federal Government, in every State and every locality. It is the instrument that Congress and the executive branch use to properly allocate the more than 180 billion dollars in Federal funds every year for many programs like Head Start, programs for older Americans, the disabled, and for transportation. Conducting an accurate census truly affects every person in this country, and quality of Census 2000 will have ramifications for decades to come.

To ensure fair and accurate data, we support the plan developed by the experts at the Census Bureau which was based upon recommendations by the National Academy of Sciences. This plan developed at the explicit direction of Congress and endorsed by virtually all of the experts will enable the Census Bureau to conduct the most accurate and cost-effective census in our history. It is a plan that will correct the inaccuracies in the former census which systematically undercounted children, minorities, and rural Americans. This collaboration between Government and the Nation's scientific community will enable Census 2000 to carry out its proud mission of protecting equality before the law, one person-one vote, and sound government.

Dr. Prewitt, one of the Nation's most distinguished social scientists and experienced executives, is the ideal person to lead the Census Bureau in this effort. He currently serves as the president of the Social Science Research Council. In the past, he has been senior vice president of the Rockefeller Foundation, the director of the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Corporation, chairman of the Political Science Department at the University of Chicago, and vice president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has also served on the boards of trustees of Washington University, Southern Methodist University, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, NORC, and the German American Academic Council.

Dr. Prewitt is a person of impeccable credentials and proven scientific integrity. I urge

the Senate to act promptly on his nomination.

Statement on Medicare and the Patients' Bill of Rights

June 23, 1998

I am pleased to add my voice in support of today's efforts by Representatives Ganske and Dingell to file a discharge petition enabling an up or down vote in the House of Representatives for a Patients' Bill of Rights. Since November of last year, I have been calling on Congress to pass such legislation.

It is now 7 months later and Congress has been unable to pass legislation, let alone hold even one Committee mark-up on a bill. With so many Americans' health at stake, I welcome the action taken today by Representatives Ganske and Dingell, and I believe it will help ensure an open debate on this issue that will allow for all parties, including Representative Norwood, to bring patients' rights legislation to the floor for vote.

Passing patients' rights legislation would build on the actions I have already taken to extend patient protections to Americans in Federal health plans. This Friday, we will publish a Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) regulation to implement new rules for all Medicare managed-care plans. The HCFA regulation will implement the new Medicare plan choices I signed into law last year as a part of the bipartisan balanced budget agreement. It will also include many of the patient protections I directed Medicare to implement last February, when I signed an Executive memorandum ordering all Federal health plans—which serve 85 million Americans—to come into compliance with the Patients' Bill of Rights. These regulations ensure that Medicare beneficiaries in managed-care plans have a range of important patient protections, including access to the specialists they need, access to ob-gyns, access to emergency room services, and an independent appeals process to address grievances with their health plans.

Now we need the Congress to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights that guarantees all Americans these important patient protections. It is my hope and expectation that the

bipartisan action being taken today in Congress will spur the House and the Senate to pass a strong, enforceable, and long-overdue bill.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Legislation

June 23, 1998

I am deeply disappointed in the action taken within the House Appropriations Committee today. Returning to the partisanship of the past, House Republicans backed a bill that would take us backwards just when we should be addressing the challenges of the next century.

Last year we made critical investments in every stage of our children's lives in a bipartisan balanced budget. From Head Start expansion to new tax credits that make college more affordable, we worked together to make smart investments in our people and our future. To build on that success, this year I proposed commonsense investments to reduce class size, modernize America's schools, and make quality child care more affordable.

Working together, we can continue to move the Nation forward. But the House Republican bill takes us in the wrong direction, short-changing critical investments in our young people—from preschool and child care to antidrug and safe after-school programs. These cuts are arbitrary, and some are extreme. This bill would completely eliminate the summer jobs program, denying more than one-half million teenagers valuable work experience. It would slow progress on our efforts to improve children's literacy and computer skills. And for poor families, the Republicans would eliminate the program that they rely on to help them heat their homes during the winter. This bill is out of step with our values and the wrong vision for America's future.